

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PAWNEE CITY, HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE CORNERSTONE BUILDING, 601 G STREET, ALL IN PAWNEE CITY, PAWNEE COUNTY, NEBRASKA.**

Notice of this meeting was given in advance thereof by advertising in the Pawnee Republican, a designated method for giving notice as shown by the Affidavit of Publishing on file in the office of the City Clerk. Notice of this meeting was given to the Mayor and City Council and a copy of their acknowledgment of receipt of the notice and the Agenda are on file in the office of the City Clerk. The availability of the agenda was communicated in advance and in the notice to the Mayor and Council of this meeting. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

**Present:** Mayor Charlie Hatfield, Council Members Pat Hatfield, Vickie Zelenka, Donnie Fisher and Susan Eisenhauer (by phone); Kellie Wiers, Deputy City Clerk; Tamela Curtis, City Clerk/Treasurer and Foreman Spencer Cumley. Absent: None.

Mayor Charlie Hatfield called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. informing all those present of the Poster stating the Open Meeting Law Changes on the West meeting room wall, next to the storage closet, accessible to the public. At this time, all those present stood to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Member Zelenka moved to accept the March 10, 2025, regular meeting minutes. Council Member Hatfield seconded the motion. Roll Call vote indicated all present voting in favor of the motion, whereupon motion carried.

The Treasurer submitted the following claims for consideration: **3/25/25 Payroll:** \$13,329.31; **Union Bank & Trust**, FWH 3274.24; **NE Dept. of Rev**, SWH 446.92; **John Hancock**, retirement 1420.74; **Allstate**, cancer/accid.184.04; **Ameritas**, vision 81.20; **Madison Nat'l Life**, life ins. 53.71; **UHC**, health ins. 7868.46; **Amazon Capital Services**, office supplies 38.93; **NPPD**, electric service 3337.30; **Pawnee True Value**, repair parts & supplies 280.90; **Spectrum**, internet & phone @ shop 184.99; **SENECA SA**, Febr. 2025 garb service 6860.47; **PCDC**, March sales tax 10,686.33; **Pawnee Co. Register of Deeds**, release mowing lien 10.00; **SEND**, admin CCCFF grant 3000.00; **Capital Bus. Syst**, Elevate Phone Syst 201.92; **Verizon Wireless**, home conn & jetpack 64.97; **ACCESS Systems**, IT services 931.60; **ACCESS Systems Leasing**, IT hardware 22.16; **Binder Bros.**, cement 542.50; **Coral's Cleaning Services**, Febr. Cleaning 80.00; **Nebr. Public Health Environ Lab**, wtr sample test 478.00; **NMC, Inc.**, equip repair 1305.93; **Wilson Electric**, electric repair @ pool 536.60; **Windstream**, internet @ swr plant 65.15, internet & phone @ library 137.06; **Black Hills Energy**, gas service 964.43; **Friedly Oil**, equip fuel 1056.15; **Lincoln Winwater**, water parts 2919.29; **Pawnee Republican**, publications 283.25; **Table Rock Appliance**, repair furnace & outlet 197.10; **Turnbull AG Tires**, repair tire on loader 303.50. Council Member Zelenka moved to approve the claims as submitted. Council Member Fisher seconded the motion. Roll Call vote indicated all present voting in favor of the motion, whereupon motion carried.

### **Tyler Keenan/JEO—Discuss WWAC Financing Packages for Water System**

**Improvements:** Previously, the Council had decided the three priorities are a new municipal supply well, an additional well generator and water meter replacements. Tyler Keenan reviewed the financial package from the State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) and the USDA. SRF can offer a loan with 1.4% interest over 30 years. The USDA offer includes a \$353,000 grant with 2.75% interest over 40 years but the City would be required to put money into a short-lived asset reserve fund. Clerk Curtis received an update from Luann Brown from USDA this afternoon. She explained the cost of the project has to hit \$2,795,000 before the USDA would be able to put a grant into the project. If the project would be less than this, then there wouldn't be any grant added but the SRF can offer a lower interest rate. Clerk Curtis had tried to make contact with city auditor Julie Bauman to talk with her about the City taking on more debt and if the City can afford it but Ms. Bauman was busy helping income tax clients. Clerk Curtis questioned the EDUs listed on each funding package. The USDA package lists 640 while the SRF package lists 521 but the actual users are 500. Tyler stated the USDA figures that off of the commercial meters. Foreman Cumley asked if the cost of the new well includes a back up generator? Mr. Keenan assured the Council those figures include a back up generator. Cumley stated he feels there are other projects more important than item #4, an additional well generator, and those funds could be used towards another project listed such as water main replacement. Discussion was had about whether building a new well will be beneficial or if that well might end up with a low water level as what happened one summer. Mr. Keenan explained there is some assurance when building a new well because there is testing going on during the whole process before a well is completed. Council Member Hatfield expressed concern that the addition of these projects will add \$189,500 operating and maintenance costs to the budget. Clerk Curtis explained the cost to be concerned about is the annual debt payment the city will have to budget for which is why she was hoping to speak with the city auditor before tonight's meeting. Currently, the City has a yearly payment of \$150,000 on water debt with 10 years left and \$119,000 on sewer debt with 8 years left. The projects could be put out for bids and when the bids come in, decide what to select and talk with the city auditor in the meantime to find out what the City can afford. If the Council decided to go with new well and water meter replacements, it would increase the customer's monthly bill around \$13.34, which would be difficult for some customers to afford. Mr. Keenan explained no matter which options the City chose to pursue, there will still be engineering costs involved, which will be 15% - 20% of the total project cost and when the projects are put out for bids, advertised, etc. there are still costs involved. Also, the City will not have to start making payments until after construction is complete, which will allow for extra time to accumulate funds. Clerk Curtis explained if the Council decides to wait, costs will probably be higher. Foreman Cumley recommended that option #5 is important to replace meters because the meters will be more accurate and probably bring in more revenue. Council agreed it would be best for the clerks to speak with the city auditor whether the City can afford another payment and then meet again with Mr. Keenan to make a decision. Discussion was also had about the water main replacement on G Street and whether the water line could be moved to lay in the City's ROW instead of tearing up the street which would be less expensive than replacing concrete on the street.

**TREE GRANT DISCUSSIONS: Review emailed correspondence between Aaron Sawyer & Clerk Curtis re: Request Permission to research Nebraska Arboretum Grant with Tree Board; Review emails re: Tree Board—April Tree Inventory; Review Draft copy of Tree**

**Grant Application; Any updates from Tree Board meeting held prior to tonight's Council Meeting:** Aaron Sawyer met with members of the Tree Board before the City Council meeting. The members include Mary Moser, John DeFreece, Pat Hatfield and Terry Borchert. Council Member Hatfield explained the Board discussed developing a tree inventory and JEO may be able to complete an aerial view of the trees in town to help complete the inventory, otherwise, it would take days to complete on foot. It was stated in an email that if a project costs over \$30,000 then an engineer has to be involved. Clerk Curtis explained that is true if the City was applying for the grant but if it goes through a nonprofit organization, then an engineer wouldn't have to be involved; only government entities. Mr. Sawyer had stated in the Tree Board meeting that Pawnee City BOLD would be in charge of the program and could apply for the tree grant. Council Member Hatfield continued that the grant requires an arborist but the city crew doesn't have time to become certified arborists. It was brought up in the Tree Board meeting that JEO does have certified arborists. John DeFreece volunteered to contact JEO about the arborist requirement. New trees cannot be planted in the ROW and it could be a problem to plant trees on private property so that leaves parks, the pond, golf course, cemetery, ball field, etc. Mary Moser had brought up that trees don't seem to survive at the ball field and recommended soil testing be completed before anymore trees are planted there. The Tree Board still has questions and plans to meet again with Aaron Sawyer. Foreman Cumley stated that it will be a big hurdle to complete the tree inventory and he is concerned who will take care of the newly planted trees? He explained that the City Crew has difficulty completing current responsibilities without adding watering and caring for newly planted trees around town and someone will probably want to be compensated for this. The City Crew has taken care of new tree plantings in the past and it is a lot of work to fill up a 350-gallon water tank and go around watering each tree planted in different locations. Also, volunteers would not be able to use city equipment since they are not city employees due to insurance reasons. Aaron had proposed that Pawnee City BOLD can take care of the trees even for over 3 years, which is necessary for a newly planted tree. Aaron Sawyer plans to meet with the Tree Board again.

**Review email/article re: Press Release to announce \$50,000 incentive package for new homes:** The City Office has received several emails and phone calls from people interested in this program. Aaron Sawyer said he has received fifty applications from people who are interested in buying one of the houses but he isn't sure if any of them qualify for the program. Aaron said that he forwarded the applications to SENDD who will determine eligibility. Foreman Cumley stated if there are anymore houses built, then the builder will have to haul the dirt off to somewhere else besides the sewer plant because there isn't room for anymore dirt there. It consists of basement clay dirt, has lots of rocks, bricks, glass, etc. in it. Foreman Cumley explained it isn't usable dirt so, eventually the City will have to pay to do something with it. The City is not equipped to sort the trash, limestone, etc. out of the dirt. There isn't any more room for concrete if someone wanted to demolish more houses. Aaron explained once the first three houses are sold, then the rest of the houses will be free of income requirements. No more houses will be built until at least one is sold. Also, more houses and apartments will be built since there are no apartments available to rent within 22 miles. These apartments will have to be managed and Pawnee City BOLD will be responsible for managing them for the required 10 years. Construction has stopped on the new houses. Aaron said he doesn't know what is holding up construction but SENDD is aware that construction has to be completed by the end of July or first part of August.

**Review/Approve Interlocal Agreement with Pawnee County for Kenneling Services with no changes:** Council Member Zelenka moved to approve the interlocal agreement with Pawnee County for kenneling services with no changes. Council Member Fisher seconded the motion. Roll Call vote indicated all present voting in favor of the motion, whereupon motion carried.

**Report and update from Council Member Fisher: Discuss requests for additional Handrails:** Council Member Fisher explained that several people have commented that it would be helpful to have a handrail in front of Trish Fisher's building to safely navigate the steps from the parking spaces. Council Member Fisher pointed out there is a handrail on the west side of the block by F street but most customers don't use it because they park in front of the building. Also, many people have requested the yellow lines on the steps in front of True Value be extended West to the end of the block so the edges of the steps are easier to see. A citizen had also stopped into the city office with the same request but also requested a handrail be installed in front of the Cornerstone Building. Discussion was had about adding a handrail in front of the Trish Fisher building, Cornerstone Building and close to the end of the ramp in front of the Cornerstone Building plus a fourth handrail if needed. Foreman Cumley stated that he could make these handrails similar to the handrail in front of the City Office as he had made that one to match the handrail attached to the Cornerstone Building. The only cost would be the metal pipe and use of a core drill. Mayor Hatfield stated he has access to a core drill. Council Member Zelenka moved to approve the installation of handrails in front of the Trish Fisher building, Cornerstone Building and a fourth handrail, if needed; plus, extend the yellow lines on the sidewalk steps from True Value west to the end of the block. Council Member Fisher seconded the motion. Roll Call vote indicated all present voting in favor of the motion, whereupon motion carried.

**Report and update from City Foreman Cumley: Discuss any updates to the Pond Restroom:** The walls are up. The next step is for Doug Daily to come in and start the plumbing hopefully, by the end of the week. Metzger will come back and pour the floors, doors and ceilings all at the same time. Wilson Electric will submit a quote for the electrical work. The City Crew plans to pour a sidewalk on each side to be handicapped accessible but only as tall as a curb so it shouldn't require handrails. The city crew will back fill the sides of the sidewalks. The toilets will be moved to a corner so they are ADA compliant. Foreman Cumley contacted Mahoney to let him know they don't plan to pour the camper pads until the restrooms are completed. Foreman Cumley plans to have reinforced sinks so they can't be broken off from the wall. Hopefully, they can install stainless steel sinks and toilets depending upon the cost. **Discuss State Sewer Inspection:** This was completed last week and the City passed. The inspector does want the City to look into the flow numbers being off. The effluent numbers are higher than the influent numbers. So, somehow, the sewer plant gains water. The sewer plant should discharge 5% less than what is brought in but our sewer plant is discharging more than what is brought in but don't know why for sure. It could be caused by velocity issues in the effluent meter but it isn't possible to calibrate the other meter. GPM can come look at the effluent meter and install a temporary meter but it costs \$2000 per week to rent. This would show if our effluent meter is bad and if so, it could cost \$5000 or \$6000 to repair. Otherwise, the effluent meter pit may need to be redesigned to fix the problem. The sewer plant is not out of compliance but the inspector was giving recommendations. There will be another inspection in 5 years. Foreman Cumley looked back on the records and the sewer plant was in compliance when it first opened but somewhere around 2013, the effluent figures are off and have been ever since. **Review/Discuss**

**updates on projects in the City:** Last Friday, the sewer jet pump went bad at the sewer plant and the blower stopped working. It will take 5 weeks to get a new jet pump which will cost around \$7000 and this was accounted for in the current budget. Foreman Cumley received a quote for a new jet pump listed at \$8460.92. A rebuilt pump is cheaper (around \$4000 to \$5000) but they usually only last about a year and a new jet pump will last around 6 years. Jr. Droge was covering last Friday and discovered the problem. Foreman Cumley recommended keeping Mr. Droge on staff as back up contract labor. Discussion was had about Mr. Droge's wealth of knowledge, initiative and work ethic. Council member Hatfield moved to retain Gary Droge, Jr. on standby at his previous hourly rate as contract labor. Council member Zelenka seconded the motion. Roll Call vote indicated all present voting in favor of the motion, whereupon motion carried. Foreman Cumley and Crew Member Barloon recently attended the Rural Water Conference in Kearney. Cumley recommended sending a couple crew members every year because they learned a lot of useful information. Brandon Holthus left today for water certification training in North Platte. The City Crew has been working on potholes, water and sewer taps for the new houses and plans to exercise water valves with help of Nebr. Rural Water. Pool and park supplies have been ordered for the Summer. Cumley reported there are problems with concrete patches on the streets and he recommends replacing them. It may be more cost effective for the city to purchase a jack hammer attachment for the Bobcat skid steer. It would cost around \$9000 but cheaper in the long run than renting one. Clerk Curtis will look at the budget to see if there are funds available. Foreman Cumley spoke with County Road Supt. Chris Rauner about attaching a camera to the county shop to face the truck parking lot. Mr. Rauner will speak to the county commissioners and get back to Cumley.

**Review Nebraska's Surface Transportation Program for FY 2025-2030:** : Clerk Curtis explained this is mainly an FYI for an opportunity to provide input on future road projects.

**Review CCCFF Grant Reimbursement Check on Cornerstone Building:** Clerk Curtis explained this check is for the rest of the grant money that was owed to the City to reimburse the City for approved expenses to renovate the inside of the Cornerstone Building.

**Review Correspondence:** Council reviewed the spreadsheet on January 2025 Total Sales Tax of \$31,833.86 with ½% Street Repairs Sales Tax totaling \$7,124.22 and \$3,336.98 being Motor Vehicle Sales Tax. Council reviewed the email from Emergency Management Director Megan Buckley with posters about the Outdoor Warning Siren Policy and Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup>. There is a statewide Tornado Drill on Wednesday, March 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. The proposed Municipal Equalization Funds (MEF) Aid for 2025-26 is \$163,604.53.

**Earth Day:** The Pawnee City High School Earth Day Service work is planned for 4/8/2025 with a rain date of 4/14/2025 and a second rain date of 5/1/2025. Hopefully the weather will cooperate this year.

Council Member Zelenka moved to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Fisher seconded the motion. Roll Call vote indicated all in favor of the motion and meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

ATTEST: Kellie A. Wiers, Deputy City Clerk

Charlie Hatfield, Mayor